



# ARKANSAS DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

*Dr. Tom W. Kimbrell, Commissioner*

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## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### Five Designated as Master Principals by Arkansas Leadership Academy

(LITTLE ROCK) -- **Ken Endris, Debbie Flora, Donny Forehand, Lisa St. John, and Karla Tarkington**, having achieved the status of **Master School Principal**, were recognized Monday, May 13, 2013, during the Arkansas State Board of Education. Each individual completed three years of rigorous professional development plus an additional year of performance evaluations to achieve the designation this spring from the Arkansas Leadership Academy's Master Principal Program. Dr. Tom Kimbrell, Arkansas Commissioner of Education, Dr. Diana Peer, Master Principal Leader, and Dr. Debbie Davis, Director of the Arkansas Leadership Academy, presented awards of distinction to the principals.

The Arkansas Leadership Academy is based in the College of Education and Health Professions at the University of Arkansas. The Academy's Master Principal Program was authorized by Act 44 of the Second Extraordinary Session of the 2003 Arkansas General Assembly. "In order to graduate Arkansas students college and career ready, leadership matters," said Education Commissioner Dr. Tom Kimbrell. "In addition to recruiting the best school leaders in the state to do this challenging work, we must support their professional growth and development. Through the Arkansas Leadership Academy, these principals have strengthened their skills, set the vision and culture for their schools and established a momentum necessary to improve student achievement."

**Ken Endris** has been the principal of Fouke Elementary for six years. He earned a Bachelor of Science in Education from the University of Houston and a M.Ed. in Administration from Prairie View A & M, Texas. "The professional development provided through the Master Principal Program has been the catalyst for reflection to move Fouke Elementary from good to great," said Mr. Endris.

**Debbie Flora**, principal of Bernice Young Elementary in Springdale for the last five years, was previously the principal at Jones Elementary, also in Springdale. She received a Bachelor's Degree in Elementary Education and a Master's Degree in Educational Leadership from the University of Arkansas in Fayetteville. Ms. Flora shared, "Participation in the Master Principal Program of the Arkansas Leadership Academy provided rich, reflective experiences that had a positive impact on the culture of our school. At our school, we have come to see ourselves as a learning community where the voices of all participants are important and the learning of both students and adults is valued. As educators we have accepted the responsibility and

understand the importance of supporting every stakeholder in reaching their highest potential.”

**Donny Forehand** is completing his fourth year as principal of Dover Elementary School. He was previously the K-2 principal in Dover for fifteen years. He graduated from the University of Central Arkansas with a Bachelor’s Degree and a Master’s Degree. Mr. Forehand said, “The training gained through the Arkansas Leadership Academy was like no other training I have been through as a professional. The real world application process of using tools learned in training is what made a difference in moving our students academically.” He offered his thanks to the staff and trainers at the Arkansas Leadership Academy.

**Lisa St. John** has been the principal at Apple Glen Elementary in Bentonville for nine years. She received her Bachelor’s and Master’s Degrees from the University of Arkansas in Fayetteville. She stated, “The experience with the Master Principal Program has been the foundation of my career as a principal. Everything that Apple Glen represents has a direct correlation to what I learned and continue to learn through the Leadership Academy. This has been the best professional development anyone could hope for and my perpetual involvement with the Master Principal Program and other ALA forums will continue to shape my educational decisions.”

**Karla Tarkington** has been the principal at Badger Elementary School in the Beebe School District for five years. She holds a Bachelor’s Degree from Ouachita Baptist University and a Master’s from the University of Arkansas at Little Rock. She said, “Being a part of the Master Principal Program has been a great experience. As a new principal it gave me excellent guidance for what leading my school should look like. It provided the needed support to make necessary changes and take needed risks.”

According to Dr. Debbie Davis, “The support of the Arkansas Legislature, the Arkansas Department of Education, and the Academy’s Partners has allowed the Master Principal Program to build the leadership capacity of principals across our state. This rigorous, four-year program enables these school leaders to enhance and accelerate student and adult learning. We are proud of these principals and commend their dedication to their students, teachers, and school communities.”

Phase I of the Master Principal Program is open to all school principals who have at least one year of experience and the support and permission of their superintendents to participate. Principals from across the state meet during the year in four multi-day sessions for intense study while applying the learning from those sessions in their schools throughout the year.

Admission to the second phase of the program requires submission of a portfolio documenting the application of the lessons learned from the first phase and the results of that work to improve student and adult learning in the school. To be admitted to the third phase, principals must complete a rigorous application process that includes evidence of their impact on education at the district, state, and regional levels. These portfolios are evaluated by stakeholders in education from Arkansas as well as from out of state. Scorers receive training through the Arkansas Leadership Academy.

After successful completion of all three phases, principals may choose to participate in a rigorous assessment by a team of trained examiners with at least one member on each team from another state. The rigorous assessment process examines evidence from three primary sources:

- Student Performance: An analysis of student academic achievement data
- Principal Performance: An analysis of a portfolio created by the principal

- School Performance: A site visit to gather evidence

Successful performance in these three areas qualifies an individual for Master School Principal status. Master Principals will receive a \$9,000 per year bonus for five years upon earning the designation. They are eligible for an additional \$25,000 per year for five years if they are selected to serve at a low-performing school.

Established in 1991, the Arkansas Leadership Academy is a nationally recognized statewide partnership of 15 universities; 9 professional associations; 15 educational cooperatives; the Arkansas Departments of Education, Higher Education, and Career Education; the Arkansas Educational Television Network; Tyson Foods, Inc; Wal-Mart Stores, Inc.; superintendent representatives; the Office of the Governor; and the State Board of Education.

For more information, visit <http://www.arkansasleadershipacademy.org/> or contact the Arkansas Leadership Academy at 479-575-3030.

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